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B. S. Department of Agriculture

F.G.  
Tm3Hh  
Housekeepers' Chat

Tuesday, November 18, 1930.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: Shoeing the Family Intelligently. Points from the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils, U.S.D.A. Recipe from the Bureau of Home Economics.

Bulletin available: "Leather Shoes: Selection and Care."

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My talk today was suggested by a question from a brand-new mother, about her brand-new baby. Tomorrow I'm going to tell you some more about her. But right now I will read you her query.

"What kind of shoes are best for babies?"

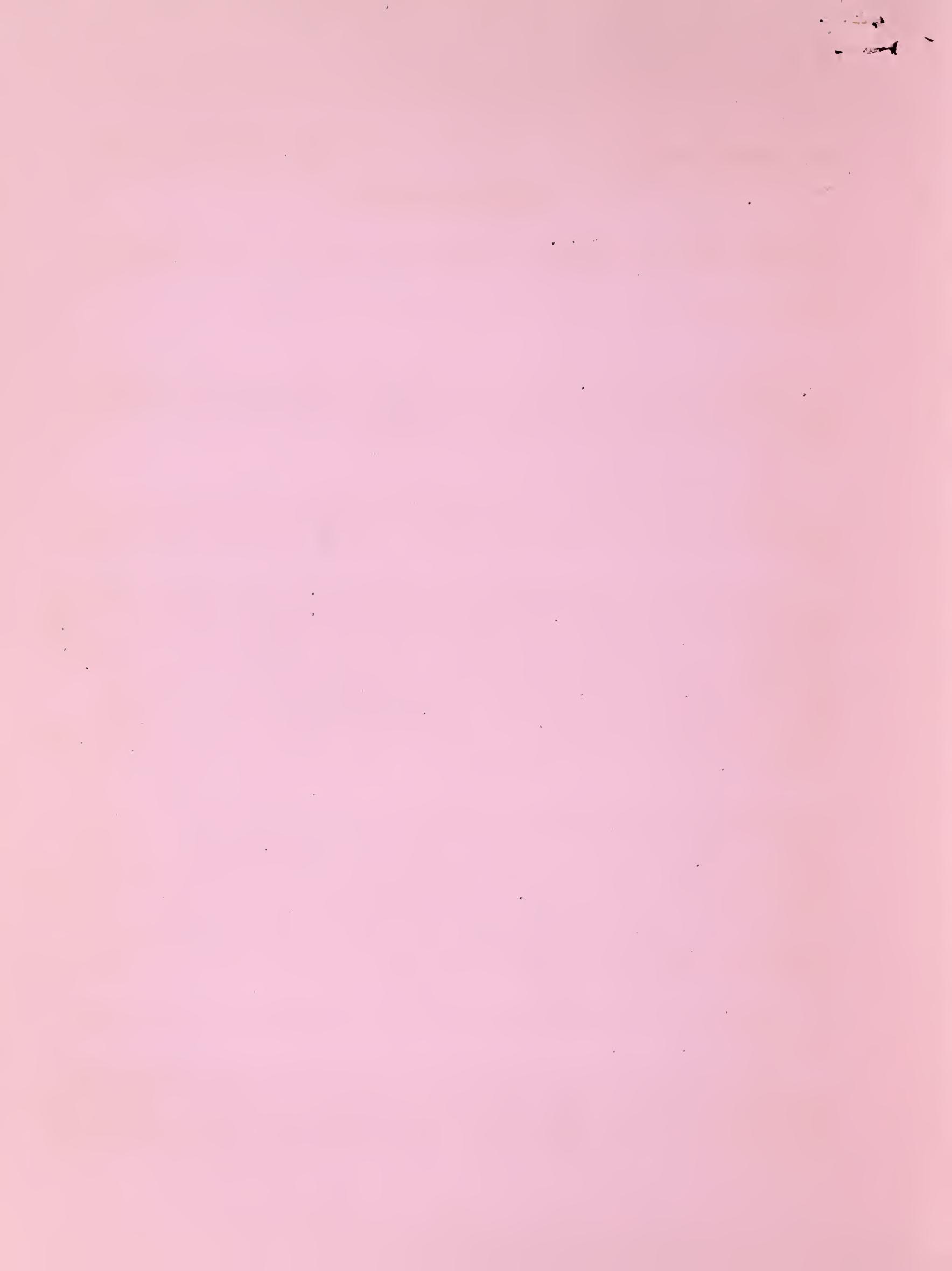
I took this question to the Leather Specialist in our Bureau of Chemistry and Soils who has made a study of shoes. This was what he told me:

"A baby does not need shoes, until walking time. Even though his fond aunts and uncles have sent him beautiful pink shoes, and adorable blue ones, don't let the baby wear them. Let him go without shoes, until walking time, and don't be in a hurry to put shoes on him, even after he begins to walk. Of course, I don't recommend that he go barefooted until he grows up, like the young man who lived in a certain mountain district. One day Jake disappeared. He didn't even show up, for dinner. "I know what's happened," said his old father. "Jake is hiding out in the mountains. He's twenty-one today, and we wuz a-going to ketch him, and put shoes on him."

"A child's first walking shoes should have flexible but firm soles, unpolished, preferably slightly buffed, and broad enough to be a steady platform under each foot. Don't get soft-soled moccasins, or shoes with very soft soles. Soft soles curl up, and make it difficult for a baby to keep his balance. Of course you should avoid soles which are stiff, or board-like. Look out for the toes, too. They should be full, or puffy, not so flat that the leather pulls straight back from the end of the sole, and cramps the baby's toes. A young foot and its bones are easily twisted, and bent out of shape, by shoes that do not fit.

"Will you give me some points on shoes for grown-ups, now?" I asked the specialist.

"The soles for women's walking shoes ought to be fairly thick. Thin soles make walking on rough surfaces, a very painful process. Cobblestones, for instance. Did you ever have to walk on rough cobblestones? They are responsible for a good many bruises and calloused feet. Thicker shoe soles



offer protection against injury from sharp, uneven surfaces, and also against water and slush. They last longer, too -- easier on the family budget.

"Recently, I have noticed many very young girls, 12 and 14-year-olds, wearing extremely high French heels. I wonder if they know that they are in a period of serious internal adjustment, and that high heels throw the body entirely out of the correct posture," the Specialist declared.

I learned also from the Leather Specialist, that narrow shoes do not allow for the natural expansion of the foot, when bearing the weight of the body. In narrow shoes, the foot can't be placed on the floor, in a natural position.

Shoes with pointed toes keep us from using our toes in walking. The toes, and especially the big toe, are fitted ~~with~~ muscles, so that the toes press against the ground when we walk, and help to raise the body. This gives a light, springing step. If tight, pointed shoes are worn, the toe motion is lost, the toe muscles lose their activity, and the ability to walk naturally is lost.

Short shoes are even worse than narrow shoes. They do more permanent damage. The foot is decidedly longer, when bearing the weight of the body, than when it is at rest. Therefore, the shoe should be fitted one-half to three-fourths of an inch longer than the foot at rest. The bones can't be pushed together lengthwise. If we wear shoes that are too tight, or too short, or with heels that are too high, we may have enlarged joints, bunions, corns, overlapped toes, hammer toes, and other painful foot troubles.

The shoe should be long enough for the foot, and it should also be long enough from the heel, to the big toe joint. That is, the shoe should not press against the arch. It should be the shape of the foot. The arch is like any other part of the body -- it becomes useless, unless exercised.

If the shoe supports the arch of the foot so much that the muscles and ligaments, which should be the supports, do not get proper exercise, these ligaments become stretched, and useless.

When the body is in a natural standing position, the toes, the ball of the foot, and the heel, are flat on the floor. When we place a block, two or three inches high, under the heel, the whole body is thrown out of balance.

"People can now buy shoes which combine the proper shape, with an attractive appearance, and good quality of material," said the Leather Specialist "And a more universal demand for such shoes, will increase the supply".

"What is an ideal shoe?" I asked.

"An ideal shoe, for general wear," said the Leather Specialist, "combines comparatively straight inner lines, rounded toes, heels of medium height, and moderately thick soles, which make for service, comfort, and safety. Some health authorities say that the shoe should be three-fourths inch longer, than the foot at rest. The shoe should be of good, durable, material. Leather is probably best. It stands hard wear, and is easy to keep clean and polished.



"Feet which have been mis-shapen by improperly fitting shoes, may need remodeling, by a series of gradual changes. If you have been wearing high heels for a long time, you will find low heels uncomfortable, for a week or so. The low heels make use of muscles which have been inactive, for a long time. And you may have to go by easy stages from a narrow, pinching, toe, to one that permits the foot to spread out to its natural size."

I'll have to save the other things the Shoe and Leather Specialist said, about taking proper care of shoes, for another talk. But if you like, you can send to the U. S. Department of Agriculture for the bulletin on "Leather Shoes: Selection and Care." It's all in that.

And I'd like to add a suggestion from my own observations. Why will women persist in wearing just "any old thing" in the way of shoes, around the house? Just when their feet are doing the hardest work and need the most support. When a shoe has lost its shape, it is likely to injure the foot. Old, worn-out shoes, with run-down heels are hard on the disposition, too.

Wednesday: A Sunshine Package for a New Baby.

